

## Doves Released at the Abbey in Memory of Loved Ones

**1000 people, including hundreds of children, gathered outside the Abbey on a beautiful Sunday afternoon to watch a symbolic release of doves and to join with others to remember loved ones who had died.**

A flock of 30 doves was released outside St Albans Abbey on Sunday as part of a special service to mark the passing of loved ones. 700 people gathered outside the cathedral before the service to watch as the birds were released.



The service has become a popular annual event, organised by the St Albans Bereavement Network and the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at the Abbey. It is an opportunity for members of the community come to come together to remember the loss of people close to them and to share their grief. The Deputy Mayor of St Albans, Cllr Geoff Harrison and the Town Mayor of Harpenden, Cllr Michael Weaver were present and The Right Reverend John Gladwin, newly appointed Patron of SABN, gave the blessing.

Prayers were said before the dove release and the Cathedral bells chimed as the doves soared in to the blue sky, circling around before flying off.

Many of the children present had experienced a bereavement during the year and in the Service that followed the Dove Release, the Sub Dean, Canon Richard Watson, spoke to them about the

symbolism of the doves. It was moving to see so many children of all ages come up to the front with their paper doves full of messages for someone special who had died and then to witness them run out into the congregation to pick up the messages written by the adults. Two trees were laden with messages on every branch. 'They come so much from the heart - from young and old - and I don't think there are words to describe how much it means.' Later the children joined with the adults in the congregation in a moving ceremony to light candles in remembrance.



The Address was given by Dr Mary Groves, founder and Patron of SABN. She spoke about her own experience of bereavement but said, 'For each and everyone of us it is our own individual journey. Not even our nearest and dearest know how we feel, even though we may be sharing the same loss'. She spoke of the feelings of isolation and the benefit of being able to share with someone who understands "talking and sharing has a magical effect in easing pain". The support provided to adults and children in St Albans, Harpenden and the surrounding district provides this opportunity to talk in a non-judgemental environment.



A client of SABN whose husband had died earlier in the year spoke movingly about her loss and the effect on her and her young daughters. An 11 year old and a 10 year old who both had fathers who had died, read an expression of hope and faith and a prayer that they had written for the Service:

“Please help everyone around them and who care about them to be patient, and understand that when you have lost someone so close to you, and they suddenly leave, it’s a lot to take in. Please help mums, dads, teachers and friends to understand we don’t mean to be irritable or difficult - we are just sometimes very overwhelmed. Thank you for those who have helped us when we’ve been feeling down and help us to remember even when it’s hard that there are always people who care.

Afterwards, people gave thanks for the Service and said how much they appreciated this special time sharing with so many others. People also took the opportunity to view the Annual Book of Remembrance that was on display and to see the names of their loved ones inscribed. The Book is on permanent display in the Ramryge Chapel in the Abbey and the trees with the dove will be in the Abbey all this week for visitors to view. A new Book of Remembrance is being prepared for 2012 and names may be submitted to SABN for inclusion before 31 Dec 2011. Further details: SABN, 01727 841841.